



Coconino County Sheriff's Office

Bill Pribil, Sheriff

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release
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Skier Caught in Avalanche on San Francisco Peaks Survives

Flagstaff, AZ – A 36 year old male from Flagstaff who was skiing on the north side of Fremont Peak in an area known as the Telemark Avalanche Path triggered an avalanche. He was trapped in the avalanche and was drug more than a quarter mile and dropped approximately 900 feet in elevation.

On Friday, February 05, 2010 at about 1:26 p.m. Emergency Communications Specialists of the Northern Arizona Regional 911 Reception Center received a call from an individual who reported to be in a group three skiers in the area of the Telemark Avalanche Path. According to the reporting party one of the skiers was caught in an avalanche and was buried under the snow.

The call was transferred to the Coconino County Sheriff's Search and Rescue (SAR) Coordinator who immediately initiated a rapid response. He called the Arizona Snowbowl and requested that a Stage 1 Avalanche Rescue Team be mobilized. He also contacted the Arizona Department of Public Safety Northern Air Rescue Unit and requested that a helicopter crew do a reconnaissance flight with a Coconino County Sheriff's Search and Rescue member on board to determine if it was possible to insert rescue personnel. Search and Rescue personnel prepared to respond from Lockett Meadow Road to the Inner Basin to assist with the rescue.

Subsequent calls from the reporting party revealed that the avalanche victim was able to self extricate and all three members of the party were located near Doyle Springs. Eventually a member of the Arizona Ski Patrol was able to make telephone contact with the victim. The victim remained at Doyle Springs and was picked up by the Arizona Department of Public Safety Helicopter and flown to the Arizona Snowbowl where he was evaluated and treated. The other two skiers remained with the victim until he was transported and then skied out to North Highway 89. The victim refused to be transported to the Flagstaff Medical Center.

Investigation revealed that the three skiers dug a hasty snow study pit and intended to ski one at a time. The victim was the first one to ski the line. The other two skiers saw the avalanche as it began and attempted to shout warnings to the victim but were too late. It is believed the avalanche fractured at about 11,500 feet and the toe of the run out was at 10,650 feet. The Telemark Avalanche Path is located approximately 1 ½ miles from the top of the Agassiz Chair Lift in remote rugged terrain. Telemark is one of the most active avalanche paths on the San Francisco Peaks.



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The Coconino County Sheriff's Office is thankful for all of the agencies who assisted in this rescue effort to include the Coconino County Sheriff's Search and Rescue Unit, the U.S. Forest Service, the Arizona Department of Public Safety Air Rescue Division and the Arizona Snowbowl Ski Patrol. We are also thankful for the positive outcome of this incident that could have just as easily resulted in a fatality.

People venturing into mountainous terrain should carry avalanche rescue equipment such as a shovel, avalanche rescue beacon, avalanche probe, and winter survival gear. Good wilderness navigation and route finding skills are essential. Be prepared for travel and emergencies in the remote winter mountain environment where rescue is not immediate. Deep snow accumulations in the northern Arizona backcountry can make over the snow travel difficult. Do not travel alone and leave a detailed trip plan with a responsible person. It is important to review recent weather reports and forecasts prior to and during your trip. Carrying a cell phone is recommended; however, it may not always work in backcountry locations and should not substitute for good judgment and preparation. It is recommended that people who use the mountain backcountry receive formal avalanche safety education and winter survival skills. Free avalanche awareness clinics are offered by the Kachina Peaks Avalanche Center. More information about these clinics can be found at www.kachinapeaks.org.

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